



GrowJobsCT

MANUFACTURING MAKES CT'S FUTURE

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Testimony of John Harrity
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Supporting Proposed Bills:

HB 5235 – AN ACT CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION TO EXPAND THE EX-OFFENDERS PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

HB 6141 – AN ACT CONCERNING A TASK FORCE ON GREEN ENTERPRISES

HB 6344 – AN ACT CONCERNING WORKER RETRAINING PROGRAMS

SB 813 – AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 19, 2009

Senator Handley, Representative Willis, members of the committee: my name is John Harrity. I serve as Director of GrowJobsCT, a coalition of business, labor and community groups, along with elected officials, that focuses on the need to sustain and expand manufacturing jobs in the state of Connecticut.

I also serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Workforce Alliance.

I am here today to speak in support of several proposed bills. I would like to comment on them briefly.

The first is **HB 5235 – AN ACT CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION TO EXPAND THE EX-OFFENDERS PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY WORKFORCE ALLIANCE**. I do not have the statistics at hand, but I know:

- 1) the issue of employment for ex-offenders is extremely serious, and failing to address it guarantees the problems will get worse, and
- 2) the Workforce Alliance program is very successful, and ultimately saves us all much more money than the program costs. Connecticut cannot afford to have any segment of our population waste their talents or get pushed into the margins.

My only other concern about this issue, which I believe the legislature should address, is why the prison system does not do a better job at addressing the low literacy rate and poor job preparedness of much of their population. But until that happens, programs like the one run by the Workforce Alliance are crucial.

As far as **HB 6141 – AN ACT CONCERNING A TASK FORCE ON GREEN ENTERPRISES**, I would recommend that the State of Connecticut focus particularly on fuel cells and hydrogen-related industry. Our state leads the world in fuel cell technology, and hosts 13% of global employment in this field. It is a technology poised for widespread commercialization. But it needs some strategic support to reach a production level that can dramatically lower the per-unit price. State purchase of fuel cells, allowing utility ownership of fuel cell generation, mechanisms for long-term financing of fuel cell purchases by the private sector in our state – are all steps to consider. If we can help facilitate production of 250 MW of fuel cell generation equipment, we can expect 10,000 – 12,000 manufacturing jobs in Connecticut in return.

I would also encourage support for **HB 6344 – AN ACT CONCERNING WORKER RETRAINING PROGRAMS** and **SB 813 – AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**. We do need to assess our worker training system and network of programs, to ensure the best coordination and most promising programs for future state growth. Again, programs that train workers in the manufacture and maintenance of fuel cells and hydrogen technologies should be at the top of any list of new green job training for Connecticut.

Finally, the issue of workforce development and training cannot be discussed without at least a mention of incumbent worker training – training that helps Connecticut companies compete more effectively through enhancing workers' skills. Connecticut is woefully behind our neighboring states in support of this highly successful training opportunity. This particular expenditure is truly an investment, with a high rate of return for our state.

Thank you.